

Section 2

Proper use of source material

In academic writing, including open-book assessment, all types of source materials, including online resources, such as websites, electronic journals or articles in an online newspaper, must be properly acknowledged. All cases of failure to acknowledge, especially where there appears to be the intention to mislead the reader about the originality, would constitute plagiarism.

- This section illustrates and explains cases for which source material must be acknowledged. For the moment do not worry about the citation style. The examples in this section are drawn from different disciplines, and therefore adopt various styles.
- The [next section](#) explains how the acknowledgement can be presented.

A simple account is given here, and more detailed guidelines and examples are given in [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#).

For other reference styles see the [next section](#).

Here we give examples of what must be acknowledged. In general, there shall be **three** elements to a citation or acknowledgement.

- (1) Setting the relevant text apart by **quotation marks**, or in some cases by using a separate indented paragraph. (This is not needed if the text is not a verbatim quote but a paraphrase.)
- (2) **A reference to the original source**. For the moment, this will be indicated by a numeral such as [1], which indicates that the source is to be given in the reference list. [Other styles of citation](#) are of course allowed. Please refer to [Appendix B](#) for citations from online resources.
- (3) **A bibliography, giving the list of references**. This is usually given at the end of the article/paper, but may sometimes be given at the end of each page.

It is important to note that just (3) alone is **NOT** enough. In other words, just listing the source in the bibliography **is no defence against a charge of plagiarism**. The reason is that inclusion in the bibliography only means that the item was **consulted**; it does not indicate that the item was **copied** or **used verbatim**.

- A direct quote must be acknowledged.

Karl Marx said "Religion is the opiate of the masses." [1]

- Even a paraphrase must be acknowledged.

Religion has been likened to opium [1].

- A citation should be given for any information that is not obvious (i.e., that the author probably had to look up).

The population of Hong Kong in 2003 was 6.78 million [1] and the per capita GDP was US\$25,432 [2].

- But if the information is generic and can be expected to be known to the readers, then no citation is necessary.

The population of Hong Kong was nearly 7 million and the per capita GDP is one of the highest in Asia.

- However, precision is generally recommended in academic writing.
- In the same way, original work that is not universally known should be cited.

Semiconductor triodes were invented by Bardeen [1].

- But if the fact is very well known, then there is no need to cite the source – nobody would imagine that you claim originality.

Nuclear energy is based on the formula $E = mc^2$.

- Suppose an original source A is quoted in B, and you only read B. Then both the primary source A and the secondary source B should be cited, to indicate honestly that you have not actually read A. In so doing, you also absolve yourself of any responsibility for the accuracy of the quote by B.

The GDP of Guangdong increased at 10.2% per annum [1].

[1] The Government of Guangdong, *Guangdong Provincial Government Annual Report 2000* (Guangdong Government Press, Guangzhou, 2001), cited in A Chan, *Economic Development in China* (Chinese University Press, Hong Kong, 2003).

- The same holds for sources for which you relied on a translation, or for which the reader might have to rely on a translation. In the following example, JETP (Journal of Experimental and Theoretical Physics) is the English translation of the Russian journal Zh. Eksp. Teor. Fiz.

The correction involves a regularized integral [1].

[1] Ya B Zeldovich, Zh. Eksp. Teor. Fiz. 39, 776 (1960) [Sov. Phys. JETP 12, 542 (1961)].

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